

II.

ST KENTIGERN'S CHURCH, LANARK.

By JOHN M. DAVIDSON, F.S.A. Scot.

Notwithstanding the popularity and missionary zeal of St Kentigern, the great apostle of Strathclyde, it is remarkable that in Scotland there is only one church dedicated to him under his own proper name. There are many others dedicated to him under the name of St Mungo. The church of St Kentigern lies immediately to the south-east of Lanark. Tradition tells that it was founded by the saint himself, towards the end of the sixth century.

By a charter of King David I., granted between the years 1150 and 1153, and addressed to "*Francis, Anglis, et Scotis, et Galwiensibus,*" he conveyed to the Monastery of Dryburgh the church, with the lands, teinds, and others belonging to it. The grant was confirmed by Bishop Herbert of Glasgow, by Malcolm the Maiden, and by William the Lyon. The right of the Monastery of Dryburgh to the Church of Lanark was confirmed by various bishops, popes, and kings from 1174 to 1258. In May 1228, Pope Gregory VIII. took the Church of Lanark and the other possessions of the Abbey of Dryburgh under his special protection, lest they should be disturbed by the injuries of wicked men.

During these centuries various donations were made by local proprietors to increase the revenues of the parish church. Several tenements in the town were so devoted. In the reign of William the Lion, Jordanus Brac granted to the church of St Mary of Dryburgh and St Kentigern of Lanark, certain lands in the parish as a charitable gift for the soul's weal of King William and others—a gift duly confirmed in the reign of Alexander by John Brac, his son. These lands are identified to this day as the lands lying immediately outside of the

churchyard wall, and extending to the Clyde. They have from time immemorial been known under the name of Braxfield, a name which during the latter half of the eighteenth century gave a title to the celebrated Lord Justice Clerk Macqueen, who was born there.

There were various chantries within the parish church of St Kentigern. Feu-duties were set aside by pious parishioners in order to supply lights. In the year 1500, King James IV. granted to William Clerkson, chaplain at the altar of the Blessed Virgin within the parish church of Lanark, a tenement in the burgh, which had reverted to the King by reason of the bastardy of the last owner. The Canons of Dryburgh appropriated the rectorial titles continuously from the time of the royal grant in their favour until the Reformation. Three priests served at its altars.

The ruins of the venerable church (fig. 1) are interesting. They possess the features of the Early English or First-pointed style of Gothic architecture, prevalent in Scotland in the thirteenth century. The structure appears to have consisted of two aisles, with at least one chancel, but without a nave. The generally accepted theory is that there was a chancel attached to the southern aisle. There is, at all events, a chancel arch there, a little over eight feet in width, supported by responds attached to the wall. There is, however, another theory that the chancel was attached to the northern aisle, which has now disappeared. The site of this supposed chancel is now occupied by what is popularly known as the Lee aisle—the local burying-place of the family of the Lockharts of Lee, the principal heritors in the parish. The adherents of this theory quote the fact of the Lee burial-place on the site as corroborative of their view, for they argue that when the ruin fell into decay there was nothing more natural than that the chief heritor of the parish should appropriate the site of the chancel as his family burying-place. It is quite possible, however, that there was a chancel attached to each aisle. The row of five pillars and six lofty pointed arches forms the centre, dividing the church into two

aisles. The pillars are alternately round and octagonal, and the two responds are half octagons. The arches have a double splay on each side. The southern aisle is 74 feet long by 20 feet wide internally. Its walls are in a good state of preservation. There is also a small lancet window in the east wall.



Fig. 1. View of the remains of St Kentigern's Church, Lanark.
(From a photograph by A. Brown & Co., Lanark.)

In the south wall there are preserved a range of five narrow lancet or acute-shaped windows with wide splayed reveals inside. That wall also contains the relics of a fine first-pointed doorway (fig. 2). The two nook shafts on each side have disappeared long since; but the first-pointed foliage in the caps is still in fair preservation. The mouldings of the pointed arch are bold and well formed. Bloxam, in his *Gothic*

Architecture, describes the doorway as exhibiting the "round mouldings with a fillet in the face, while the capitals are richly sculptured."

Attached to the church, and extending outwards from the south wall, there is a modern apartment in the possession as a mausoleum of the family of the Lockharts of Cleghorn. It is surmised that the



Fig. 2. Doorway in South Wall. (From a photograph by Rev. W. W. Dawson.)

predecessor of this outshot was the sacristy in which the sacred utensils were kept and the clerical vestments deposited.

The belfry stood outside the west wall. It has completely disappeared, but its site is still definable. The bell which formerly hung in the belfry is still to the fore. It was removed to the town steeple when St Kentigern's Church was disused for public worship. It is

still rung several times each day. The traditional date of the bell is 1110, as set forth in an inscription of 1740. Till the year 1838 it bore an inscription in the following terms :—

“ 1. Date Anno 1110
 I did for twice three centuries hing
 And unto Lanark City ring
 Three times I Phoenix-like have past
 Thro' fiery furnace, till at last
 2. Anno 1659
 Refounded at Edinburgh
 By Ormston and Cunningham,
 Anno 1740.”

In 1838 the bell was accidentally broken, and was subsequently recast. The old inscription then disappeared, and gave place to the existing inscription, which is : “ This large bell of Lanark, originally founded in 1110, recast in 1659, and again in 1740, was accidentally broken in 1838, refounded the same year, enlarged in weight upwards of 4 cwts., and presented by James Murray, Esq., Cornhill, London, chronometer-maker to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty and the Hon. East India Company, as a token of regard for the burgh of Lanark, where he spent his early days.”

In his *Book about Bells*, published in 1898, the Rev. Geo. S. Tyack states that a bell at Fontenville near Bayeux in France, bearing the date 1202, was reputed to be the oldest dated bell in Europe until the year 1858, when it fell and was cracked. He also mentions a veteran bell at Freiborg in the Black Forest, dated 1258, and one at Cloughton in Lancashire, dated 1296. The age of the Lanark bell is, of course, a matter of tradition. There is no direct evidence of its existence in the twelfth century, nor for several centuries thereafter. It is very doubtful if any bell of that nature existed in Scotland at so early a period. There is an entry in the Lanark Burgh Records of date 12th June 1488, as follows :—“ Item for stokyn ” (*i.e.* fitting with a stock or shaft) “ of Sanct Mongo bell and mendyn of the kyst and nailis xij d.”

The church of St Kentigern suffered at the hands of the iconoclasts at the time of the Reformation. It was then stripped of its images, and its revenues were confiscated. It continued, however, to be used as the parish church for a century and a half thereafter. By the time of the Revolution of 1688 it had fallen into a state of great disrepair. A proposal to repair or rebuild in 1709 was opposed by the Town Council, and about that time St Kentigern's appears to have been abandoned. Decay rapidly overtook the disused building. The roof fell in, and gradually the masonry crumbled away. The northern aisle through course of time almost entirely disappeared.

Towards the beginning of the nineteenth century there was erected on the area inside the south walls of the church a watch-house for detecting those who violated the sepulchres of the dead. The house consisted of one apartment, entered by a flight of stone steps outside the building. The incongruous erection stood for over fifty years.

In the year 1874 certain restorations were executed on the church ruin. A large gap in the west wall was built up, and the present polished doorway formed in the centre, with columns and sill of single stones. The south wall was levelled to two different heights, and a stone cope placed along the top of it, and of the west wall, and the walls of the arches. The ruin was also strengthened and improved by inset building at various parts. Three sculptured stones—two of them having done duty as steps in the watch-house stair, and the other found buried underground near one of the pillars—were built into the west wall of the church. The designs on these are not very decipherable now.

As a guarantee of the efficiency of the restoration, I may add that the operations were carried on under the guidance of the esteemed Vice-President of this Society, Mr Thomas Ross, LL.D.

The church of St Kentigern has a historical interest, in respect that it was within its walls, as Blind Harry tells us, that Sir William Wallace first saw the young lady who became his wife, and that

at a later date they were united in the bonds of matrimony. The surrounding graveyard is also the reputed burial-place of William Lithgow, the Scottish traveller, a native of Lanark. There, too, are interred many of the Covenanters of the district, some of whom suffered in the flames. And immediately under the shadow of the old church there rest the remains of Dr William Smellie, the famous obstetrician of the eighteenth century, and of Robert Macqueen, Lord Justice Clerk Braxfield, the much misjudged lawyer of that time.